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Thacher - The Era - 1849

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THE ERA

AND THE

APOSTLES OF SELF-GOVERNMENT.

AN ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW-ENGLAND SOCIETY

OF LOUISIANA,

DECEMBER 22, 1848.

Joseph Stevens Buckminster (?)
BY J. S. B. THACHER,

MEMBER OF THE NEW-ENGLAND SOCIETY OF LOUISIANA.

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NEW-ORLEANS, DEC. 22, 1848.

HON. JUDGE THACHER.

DEAR SIR,—

At a meeting of the New-England Society of Louisiana this evening, I was charged with the agreeable duty of communicating to you their thanks for the able and instructive discourse pronounced by you before them to-day, and to solicit a copy for publication.

I avail myself of this occasion to express to you my gratification personally on the manner in which you developed the principles of the founders of our Republic.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Yours, &c.

H. A. BULLARD.

President.

NEW-ORLEANS, LA., DEC. 23, 1848.

HON. H. A. BULLARD,

Pres't N. E. S.

DEAR SIR,—

I am very much flattered by the great compliment of your Society in requesting a copy for publication of the oration delivered by me yesterday before its members, and I place it at your control. I likewise feel grateful for the kind expression of your own sentiments respecting my humble efforts to illustrate the principles of our Founder Fathers.

I am,

Most respectfully,

Your friend and ob'd't serv't,

J. S. B. THACHER.

THE ERA

AND

THE APOSTLES OF SELF-GOVERNMENT.

It is a sublime contemplation to retrace mighty events to their causes, revolutions to their starting point, and nations to their origin. It raises human action to grandeur by connecting apparently small beginnings with lofty achievements and magnificent results. It has therefore been a passion with all great nations to indulge and glory in the retrospect of the eras in which, and the founders by whom, their mighty trees of empire were planted on some lone island or forest-covered shore. Judea's sacred lyrics are perpetually running back to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the founders of their Theocratic nation; to the era of their early captivity; to their baptismal passage of deliverance through the billows of a cloven sea; to the forty years of armed sojourn in the Arabian deserts, where the death of an entire generation bleached the stains of hundreds of years of bondage from the national character, and prepared them to pass the defiles of Idumea, and enter upon the conquest of the teeming vales of Palestine, an embattled host, irresistibly disciplined, and prepared for the career of power under their Seers, Judges and Kings, which made Jewry immortal in annals, and Jerusalem the home of sacred literature, the seat of heaven-born Theocracy, and the theatre of the great Drama of Salvation.

Egypt, too, was proud of her early dynasty of Shepherd Kings, and going still farther back, endeavored, in the lofty sentiment of ancestral dignity, to link their origin to the reign of the immortal gods on earth. Greece, too,—while she sought to forget that much of her ancestry were the pirate hordes that infested the Ægean and the Tyrrhene seas, hiding amidst the rocks and secret bays of Epirus and the Strophades, never ceased to remember her Phœnician origin, Ionia

having been settled by the descendants of Ion. Ion or Javum* was the son of Japhet, and grandson of Noah. Ion's eldest son (in Hebrew, Eliza or Elissa, in Greek 'Ellas) gave name to the city of Elis, and to the river Elissus or Ilissus. Athens never could forget the respectability of that Egyptian colony under Cecrops, which fortified the lofty rock of the Acropolis, and commenced the safeguards of a civic government. Grecian fable would make the origin of that country celestial; but history points to the first settlers as so barbarous, that they decreed divine worship to that benefactor who first taught them to feed on acorns instead of the herbage of the field.

Yet coming up from an origin so obscure, Greece herself was the mother of mighty empires. From that volcanic explosion of battle which levelled the walls of Troy, and scattered her proud palaces in the dust, came the subject of the immortal Maro's Epic Song, "*Arms and the Man*," who saved from the red whirlpool of slaughter which engulfed the Trojan Race, became a pilgrim wanderer, and finally, on the banks of the yellow Tiber, founded an empire which avenged on Greece in after times the sack and destruction of Troy. Carthage, Rome's sturdiest antagonist, had a more unequivocal origin, coming from world-renowned Tyre, on the Phœnician coast, being settled by a Tyrian princess, Elisa, the Dido of Virgil, who as related by the Jewish Rabbins, was a near relation of the famous Jessebel, a Jewish Queen. The beautiful city of Marseilles, on the Mediterranean coast of France, unlike the rest of Gaul, boasted a direct parentage from a city in Ionia, having been colonized 600 years before the birth of Christ, and, in the time when Rome was at the summit of power, was a celebrated school for politeness, wisdom, virtue and the arts and sciences, that according to Tacitus, equalled if not rivalled Athens herself.

One fact, however, cannot escape the attention of the historical critic, that all the emigration to renowned localities

* Synonymous names in Hebrew, and for pronunciation either way dependent on the use or non-use of Hebrew points.

which have been boasted as the plantings of empire, were superinduced on a previous savage population. The bull's hide measurement was more than once resorted to, to procure footing on soil previously occupied by an inferior race.

But what shall we say of American origin, and answer the famous old Western question of "Where did you come from?" in a manner satisfactory to the curiosity of a world just awakening to the natural grandeur, power and influence in the comparatively new world of the Western Continent. We came from England it is true; but where did England come from? What noble blood flows in the veins of our proud parent nation, entitling her to her supremacy of moral influence and physical power, and us to our just pride of ancestry which enables us to look backward without a blush, and forward with the full assurance of a glorious destiny.

Historical accuracy compels us to admit that our mother England of such national renown has had every advantage which physiologists ascribe to the intermixture of the blood. The native Anglie blood could not have failed of receiving an intermixture from the world-conquering Romans during their four hundred years of armed occupation of the soil of England. One of the noblest ingredients in martial prowess must have been infused in this descent. The Danish and Saxon dynasties next supervened, adding to the national blood the wild and terrible impulses of the Vi-kings and feudal chieftains of northern Europe; and next over all rolls the Norman invasion under William the Conqueror, deluging England, not only with his Norman-French, but with the letters, the laws, the arts and sciences of Normandy, then one of the most advanced and cultivated districts of Europe. The Scotch, Welsh and Irish, in far reaching and unmixed descent, have much the advantage of any other parts of the United Kingdom; the latter nation boasting the same Phœnician descent as Carthage, and a succession of one hundred and seventy-five kings before the advent of Christ, coming down from Milisius, the old Phœnician emigrant to Innisfallen. But America has not only the full advantage of the Anglo-Roman, the Anglo-Danish, the Anglo-Saxon, the Anglo-Nor-

man descents, but the Scotch, Irish, Dutch, German, and pure Gallic are found in the savory mixture. Like our language, our national blood is compounded of the soft, the liquid, the florid, the stern, the rugged, the high-souled and sublime of all lands. The compound, so various and differently derived, must be most excellent for the multitudinous uses of existence.

Thus for the various stations of civic, military, and private life, the polygenous population of these United States furnish the most boundless profusion of fitting character, talent and qualification. Is there no good reason why the Germans are made the watchmen and guardians of many of our cities—why the turf and peat diggers of Ireland excavate our canals—why the Italians plant our vineyards—the Savoyard and the Swiss renovate the worn out lands of Maryland and Virginia—or the polite and voluble French fill our magazines of fashion? The legal and mercantile professions teem with the shrewd and thrifty Scotch and North Irish. Wales and England make our gardens the Edens of the Western Hemisphere, and our fields and prairies the granaries of both the old world and the new. And over and above all our national derivations, embracing them in an indissoluble one, is reared the Palladium of Self-Government!

The Sibylline Leaves left us by our founder fathers have this charm emblazoned in every line, that in this wide realm of national equality, happiness and plenty, there is no power above the will of the People—that all are equally the Governors and the Governed—that no power or distinction is hereditary, and that birth itself in this land of freedom gives no advantage over foreign birth in the ultimate enjoyment of civic rights, or the powers of citizenship. The charm is self-government which has enchanted a world. It is this which burdens the Rhine with pilgrims, wending to this land of Equality. It is this which crowds Brest, and Havre, and Liverpool with emigrants to the United States. It is this which feeds the mighty stream of our population, rolling onward with the annual involution of millions upon millions.

Who were the Apostles of this great mission of Self-Government—who first, on the American Continent, preached its

doctrines, erected its temples, and kindled the perpetual fires upon its altars?

To answer this question, we must unroll the volume of English History, and look to the records of that era when Henry VIII, and his daughter Elizabeth, threw the keys of St. Peter into the sea, disowned spiritual allegiance to seven-hilled Rome, and established a state church on the basis of the German dissent from papal doctrines and sovereignty. The error of this change consisted of the substitution of one species of ecclesiastical tyranny for another. To sectarians and dissentients the Church of England was as unforgiving as Rome had been. The change of doctrines was far more perceptible than the change of practice—the popedom having quietly concentrated itself in the crown of England, the incumbent being Head of the Church as well as of State, and the Prelacy having subsided in the bench of Archbishops and Bishops in the House of Lords. Catholic Ireland, and Presbyterian Scotland were not the only ones who groaned under this stern substitution of one species of ecclesiastical tyranny for another, in many respects more unequal in its bearings on equal rights than the usurpation of Rome. The dissentients and Independants of England were equally distressed, exposed to forfeiture, imprisonments, disability to hold offices of trust and profit, and forbidden the assemblage of their societies and the public promulgation of their doctrines. Equally with the Church establishment of the advocates of separation from Rome, they wished a purer reformation, a full separation of Church from secularity and from Government, and thus they derived the distinctive name of "*Puritans*," given them in derision, as being "righteous overmuch."

A worshipping congregation of these suffering non-conformists left England together, and settled in Holland for a time, as a place of refuge where they could enjoy their religion, consolidate their society, and where they made their final arrangements for the far distant shores of Virginia, at which place, under a royal grant to Sir Walter Raleigh, a settlement was in progress of formation. The residence of these wanderers in quest of liberty of conscience in Holland gave

them higher and holier views of religious freedom ; and when they actually crossed the ocean on their pilgrimage, it was one of the most fortunate occurrences in the wide range of human events, that they mistook the course, and landed on the rock-bound shores of Massachusetts Bay, rather than at the North of Hudson River, to which they had intended to proceed. Thus the only early colony on the American shore which sought for a freer worship, and for the sake of Holy Freedom, had a wide, unoccupied and undisputed field of active demonstration.

The same year the emigration from the English Church in Leyden took place, some merchants and opulent gentlemen in England were incorporated under the style of "The Council for the affairs of New England or North Virginia," but as the patents or land jurisdiction of the Company were vague and unsettled, it was the intention of the emigrants to have settled farther South. The parting of these pious and excellent persons from their church and pastor at Leyden was heartbreaking and most affecting. Amidst tears and blessings, only about one hundred, consisting of men, women and children, could be got ready for a voyage to the new world, the remainder of the Church having resolved to defer their emigration until these pioneers had made a home for them in the wilderness. The final outfit was made from Southampton in England. These pilgrims had been in the Netherlands, fugitives from England for conscience sake, more than twelve years, from 1607 to 1620. They set sail from Southampton August 5th, 1620, and were, as many suppose, treacherously carried too far north by the captain of the Mayflower, making land at Cape Cod at an advanced season of the year, November 9th, old style* On the 11th of November they entered into a civic compact, which was the first written constitution of government ever adopted and signed on the continent of North America. This solemn document commenced with the emphatic "In the name of God, amen!" acknowledged the signers to be loyal subjects of King James,

* Graham's Colonial History, vol. 1, p. 144.

and that the object of the civil compact, in their own language, was "for our own better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most convenient for the general good of the Colony, to which we promise all due submission and obedience."*

It will be seen that the legislative power, that great lever of self-government, is boldly assumed in this the first Anglo-American constitution. The same doctrine is repeated in plainer phraseology in the following Declaration or Bill of Rights, made sixteen years afterwards, in these words:—"We, the associates of the Colony of New Plymouth, coming hither as freeborn subjects of the kingdom of England, endowed with all and singular the privileges belonging to such, being assembled, do enact, ordain and constitute,—That no act, imposition, law or ordinance, be made or imposed upon us, at present or to come, but such as shall be enacted by consent of the body of freemen or associates, or their representatives legally assembled."†

These solemn official documents breath the spirit of a people determined from the very first to be free, to legislate for and govern themselves,—not for any worldly or ambitious purpose, but, in the words of this same declaration, that they might "with the liberty of a good conscience enjoy the pure scriptural worship of God, without the mixture of human inventions and impositions, and that their children after them might walk in the holy ways of the Lord."

It will not be the design of this address to present connected narration, but to develop the governing principles of the great and illustrious founders of New England. Often have our fountains of sympathy been stirred by the recital of the sufferings of the pilgrims, one hundred and one in number, as they stepped upon Plymouth Rock, and before five months had elapsed only fifty of their number remaining alive, and of that fifty, all but five prostrate with sickness! In a great national picture of the "Landing of the Pilgrims," a crouch-

* Plymouth Colony Laws, p. 19.

† Bradford's History of Massachusetts, App. 435.

ing Indian is seen in the back ground, kneeling to the pioneers of New England. and with tremulous humility offering them an ear of Indian corn. It was that corn, together with the fish they caught from the sea, that preserved their lives until the sterile soil of the rock-bound cape had reluctantly produced the staff of their existance. A sublime moral picture might be drawn from a puritan's dinner table during that first dreadful winter, at which a crowd of famished people gather, and the master of the feast spreads wide his hands, as related by Cotton Mather, and most fervently returns the thanks of his soul to the Almighty Preserver "who had given them to suck the abundance of the seas and of the treasures hid in the sands." These thanks were given over, and this dinner made, from a single dish of that species of clams called "*quahaug*" boiled, and eaten without bread or any condiment.*

In 1624 and in 1628 other portions of the English Leyden Church came over and joined these brave and suffering pioneers of empire in the new world. In 1630 when, the Colony of Massachusetts Bay was founded at Boston, Charlestown and Cambridge, the Plymouth Colony numbered three hundred persons. The settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was on a scale of comparative splendor and opulence, fifteen hundred having come with Governor Winthrop, in 1630, to Boston, two hundred having arrived at Dorchester immediately preceding his accession. He also found three hundred settlers at Charleston and Salem. Seventeen ships were employed in bringing over this large body, their effects and their cattle. All these emigrants left their homes for the same purposes as the Plymouth Colony, under a grant from the throne of all the lands lying between the rivers Charles and Merrimac, and extending three miles south of all or any streams connecting with those two rivers, taking in, of course, the whole of what is now included in Suffolk county, as well as the Peninsula of Boston, then called Trimountain, the Indian name having been Shawmut.

The interests between these two colonies being perfectly identical, the greatest amity and co-operation prevailed be-

* Mather's *Magnalia*, Vol 1. p. 72. Webster's Dictionary.

tween them. They were all not only the noblemen of nature by their hardihood of character and moral courage and endurance, but they would rank with the best citizens, and the best blood of England. As a body they included more liberally educated gentlemen, perhaps, than any succeeding generation of their descendants has done, in proportion to the number of the population. The quaint Cotton Mather, in his "Magnalia," says:—"Gentlemen of ancient and worshipful families, and ministers of the gospel, them of great fame at home, and merchants, husbandmen, artificers to the number of some thousands, did for twelve years, together carry on this transplantation. It was indeed a banishment rather than a removal, which was undergone by this glorious generation, and you may be sure sufficiently afflictive to men of estate, breeding and conversation."* The first governor, Carver, died the first winter. The learned and good Bradford succeeded. Winslow, his successor, who was annually elected governor for thirty-six years, was a man of education, and a profound linguist; and a host of the Plymouth Colony names, and immense numbers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were men of distinguished birth and standing in their native land. Miles Standish was of noble blood, as well as a man of war, the Joshua of the Plymouth Colony. Among the females, the Right Honorable Arabella Johnson, the wife of Isaac Johnson, left her home of luxury in an English earldom, to lodge in a comparative wilderness. Her dust, with that of her husband, who could not long survive her, now lies entombed in the burying-ground of the stone chapel, in School street, Boston. The wives of Humphreys, and of the Rev. Messrs. Shearman, Bulkley, and Whiting, were daughters of noblemen, as also lady Moody. Many knights and barons, as Sir Henry Vane, Sir Richard Saltonstal, Sir William Phipps and others, were among the early settlers. These reminiscences are only made for the benefit of those who, from some unaccountable defect in education, have been led to associate puritannical descent and principle with a low and vulgar origin.

In the spirit of the most entire self-dependance, the General

†Mather's Magnalia Vol. 1, p. 64.

Court, on the 8th day of September, 1636, made a grant of four hundred pounds to establish a college, to which was added the bequest of the Rev. John Harvard, whose venerated name was consequently bestowed on the university, which now for more than two centuries has been the pride of Massachusetts and the glory of our country.* In 1639, the widow and heirs of the Rev. Mr. Glover owned the first printing press ever established in America; it passed into the hands of Samuel Greene of Cambridge, The first thing printed on this continent was "The Freeman's Oath."† Thus the two great engines of moral movement, the College and the Press, were early erected in the colony.

But in all the movements and conduct of these two colonies, from which sprung all New England, (one by dissent Providence and Rhode Island Plantations,) nothing appears more prominent than their absolute determination of self-government. Bradford, in his History of Massachusetts, says: "They felt fully competent, by the grants of power in their charter from the King, and by virtue of their rights as Englishmen, to make laws for the support of civil authority. * * * * That they were ready to exercise all the powers granted them by their charters, there is abundant proof; and if they exceeded those powers, it was generally, if not in all cases, owing to their distant location from the parent country, which rendered the exercise of sovereign authority necessary; or to their jealous care to preserve their religious liberty. The magistrates (of the Boston Bay Colony) were consulted by the government of Plymouth, as to the execution of a man for murder, committed within that jurisdiction; and they advised that he should be put to death. It was a plain case of felonious homicide. But it was a question with some in Plymouth whether the colonial government had authority to inflict capital punishment; or whether the case should not be referred to the judicial tribunals of England.‡

The doctrine of "No taxation without representation" was early broached in colonial history, and upon the levy of the very first tax laid by the General Court or Court of Assistants

* Quincy's Hist. Har. Uni. vol. 1, 8.

† Eliot's Biog. Dic. 227.

‡ Bradford's Hist. Mass. pp. 27, 28.

in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the people of Watertown objected to payment on the ground that it was without just authority, and an arbitrary proceeding that the governor and assistants should impose taxes without the voice of the whole freemen. But they consented to pay, convinced by the argument that the assistants were chosen by all the freemen with power to govern the plantation.*

Of their civil character, Bradford says of the Pilgrims:—"Their distinguishing trait was a sacred regard for divine revelation, united with the conviction that civil government was essential to social order and justice. But republican or democratic principles were recognized in their full extent. The whole body of the freemen were to choose magistrates, and make the laws in person, or by their deputies, and every attempt to evade this principle was early opposed and suppressed."†

The same leading sentiments ran through all the colonies of New England, and a close communication and interchange of opinion and military succor were extended from the settlements of Maine and New Hampshire to those of Hartford and New Haven on the Connecticut grants. They neither solicited nor expected aid from the mother country in men and money for defence or improvement of their forest-covered soil. In 1638, "The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company" was organized in Boston, the anniversaries of which have come down unbroken through a period of more than two centuries, celebrated with much official pomp and splendor.‡ The next year, two regiments of militia, of 500 men each, were formed and paraded with great display, commanded severally by the Governor and the Deputy Governor.

Of the religious character of the colonial settlements of New England much has been written by the most eloquent pens of the old as well as the new world. One says of the Puritan:—"He was made up of two men—the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion;—the other, proud,

* Bradford's Hist. Mass, pp. 29, 30.

† Ibid p. 31.

‡ Whitman's Hist. An. and Hon. Ar. Co. 12.

calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker, but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement he prayed with convulsions and groans and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels, or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the beatific vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the Millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girded on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them,"*

The charge against the good and venerable founders of the New England colonies, of intolerance and sentiments of exclusiveness, is not well substantiated. Their object was to establish a well ordered and a religious community; of course they were particular with whom they communicated. The "Right Worshipful" Edward Winslow, the third governor of the Plymouth colony, says of his people, that they were entirely of the same faith with the reformed churches in Europe, and that they admitted to communion with them the communicants of the French, the Dutch and the Scotch churches, by virtue of membership in those communions.† They would indeed have been recreant to their own principles if they had not kept their community pure in doctrine and spotless in character, as far as the power to do so was vested in the majority of the founders. It is one of the proudest boasts of the sons of New England, that while some of the colonies were in part settled by the poor, the outcast, and even the criminal of society, the settlement of the Bay colonies was made entirely from the respectable and worthy classes. While old England transported her convicts to other portions of America, New England shipped back her ungovernable members, as a punishment, to England.

The latitude of free enquiry and religious opinion may be

* MSS.

† Magnalia, 1, 58.

known from the fact that at the first Council of the magistrates and clergy of the province, held in Aug., 1637, eighty-two heretical opinions were noted and protested against, as being cherished by persons living in the colonies.* The colonists were thoroughly protestant, and could not, in the spirit of the age in which they lived, be expected to be tolerant to the Roman church. The Rhode Island colony went so far that its soldiers would not march under the banner of England until they had cut out the red cross, an insignia as they thought, of papacy.†

The establishment of Harvard College, and the influence of its learned and noble-minded Presidents, Dunsted, Chauncey, Hoar, Oakes, Rogers, and the Mathers, suffused the moral atmosphere of New England with a glory, richer than the dolphin hues of a Southern sunset. In Mather's enumeration of the churches and pastors, made in 1696, of one hundred and twenty clergymen, one hundred and five have the initials "H. C." affixed to their names, indicating that they have been educated at Harvard.‡

"Under the English heirarchy," says the quaint but learned Cotton Mather, "the persecuted servants of God had been in a sea of ice mingled with fire, though the fire scalded them, yet such cakes of ice were over their heads, that there was no getting out."§ The consequent expansion of mind, when our fathers felt the freedom of the new world, where no shadow from an unrelenting church establishment came over them with chilling blight, may well surpass the power of language to describe. They were as unbound and as chainless as the blue heavens over them, as the dashing waters of their own mountain torrents. Their great and free thoughts were like the uncaged wings of their own forest eagle. The chains of the old world clanked on their ears from afar. The width of the great Atlantic intervened, and the murmurs and the memories of moral wrong, usurpation and violence grew less and less, mingling like dying echoes, with the roar of the ocean. Is it any wonder then, that giant Free-

* *Magnalia* 2, 443. † *Ibid.* 2, 434. ‡ *Ibid.* 1, 79. § *Ibid.* 1, 64.

dom was born amidst the hills of New England—that, when her thunder clouds rolled wild amidst the mountains, the cradle of liberty should have rocked that infant to manhood, and sent him forth a Hercules, to battle with tyrants, and found the great empire of self-government and freedom of opinion?

But declamation profanes so holy a theme. Like one standing awe-struck beneath the dome of some solemn antique temple, I have no language of description. The great spirit of the place, the thrilling pulsations of moral grandeur, oppress me. The pictures of the magnificent past must be taken from the words and deeds themselves of the great builders of our temple of Freedom. Let them be their own commentators.

They were a people of sincerity, and plain and direct in speech. The learned Cotton Mather, in a lecture preached in Boston, July 1697, thus addresses those of his congregation who had overreached and defrauded others in trade: "Make all the restitution ye can, ye cheats, or expect the judgment of God upon you. * * * * We have too far degenerated into Indian vices. The vices of the Indians are these; they are very lying wretches, and they are very lazy wretches, and they are out of measure indulgent to their children; there is no family government among them. We have shamefully *indianized* in all these abominable things."* There was surely little flattery in such language as this addressed to the velvet aristocracy of "ears polite," by a man of such deep erudition that he might be said to have thought, dreamed, and wrote in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, only translating his ideas into vulgar English as a duty in his vocation.

Amidst my own ancestral heir-looms, some private diaries kept by a pious and learned clergyman, and seen by no eye but his own until the hand that wrote them had been nearly two centuries cold in death, like looking-glasses of the soul, disclose all that was in his pure mind, showing the constant religious dependance and reference to a present God, which were such prominent traits in the pilgrim character. In a neat and beautiful hand, interspersed with elegant steno-

* *Magnalia*, 2, 344.

graphic passages, the doings and the thoughts of every day are faithfully recorded. Like a rent through a mass of clouds showing far up into the blue beyond, such simple and unreserved memorials show far into the spirit of that pure and primitive age. An extract or two, taken almost at random, will not violate the privacy of a tomb which has been closed for more than a hundred and seventy years. Under date of April 20th, 1679, the following note occurs:—

"Sab. I preached for Mr. Mather in the afternoon. In ye morning I heard Mr. Mather; hee made a choice sermon about Christs leading his saints, to fountaines of living water, by wh^{ch} discourse God was pleased to refresh my soul, and to make me desirous y^t Christ might be my leader, ye Capt of my salvation. My text was II Cor. 5, 19, ye Lord was pleased to draw forth my heart before preaching in desiring divine aide, help and assistance, who did, in some measure, grant my request therein, blessed be his holy name forever."

"April 29, 1679. Y^s day goodman Lamb made an end of my alley, and I got him to take up the stile between Mr. Allen and mee. Y^s evening was ye first time of our playing at nine pinnes on my alley."

"April 30, 1680. I spoke at goodwife Bumstead's from 7 Rom. 24, 25; ye Lord was pleased to assist in praying and preaching: praised be his holy name. Y^s night I paid five shillings and sixpence for a pack of nine pinnes and bowles."

"May 7, 1679. I bought an Indian girl of Mr. Checkley, and was to pay five pound in a month after I received her, and five pound more in a quarter of a year."

"May 14, 1679. This night Margaret the Indian girle came to live with mee. Ye Lord make her a blessing to the family, and her coming under my rooffe a blessing to her soule, y^t she may learne to know and fear the Lord!"

"Aug. 18, 1679. When I came home, I found y^t my Indian girl had like to have knocked my Theodora in ye head, by letting her fall, wherefore I took a good walnut stick, and beat ye Indian girl to purpose till she promised never to doe soe any more; after which I studied."

"Jany. 31, 1682. I appointed a fast for ye general Court

which was to set, and for the continuation of our libertys, civil and sacred, and for the rising generation, and for a sanctified improvement, and for the general epidemical illness, and for the suffering cause of Christ in France."

"June 18, 1683. Y^s morning my negro Ebed ran away."* But enough to show the spirit, the manners, and the institutions of the age!

Twenty-four years after the landing of the Pilgrims, England, from whose cruel shores they had been driven to a new world, was shaken by a terrible revolution, before which monarchy passed away as a dream, and Republicanism for a while swayed the destinies of the Commonwealth. The Church establishment fell with the head of the king. On the very day of the execution of the tyrannical and sanguinary Primate of England, Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, the liturgy was abolished by public act. The nobility fell also; and so strange, sudden, unforetold was Cromwell's passage over a shattered throne, an extinguished aristocracy and a despoiled mitre to the helm of government, it would almost seem as if the Puritan prayer had prevailed with the wrestling angel of Providence, and that a swift vengeance had been meted to both throne and altar, as a judgment for intolerance and the unjust elevation of the privileged orders. One would have thought that Cromwell, the arch spirit of the storm of revolution, would have regarded New England with a fond and paternal eye. It was not so. There was too much and too proud a style of freedom in the new world to meet the approbation of a Protector so despotic in his feelings. New England learning and taste revolted at the coarseness of the Rump and Praise God Barebones Parliaments. The "one man power" pleased them no more than the grinding tyranny of the orders of privilege. A coldness existed between the Protector and the Pilgrims. He requested them to make war upon the Dutch in New York. They reluctantly acquiesced, promised to comply with his commands with this singular reservation, *whenever those commands did not conflict with their consciences!* No wonder

* MS. Diary of P. Thacher, Minister at Milton, Mass, the second of the name in America.

Cromwell projected to transport the colony to Jamaica, and make them sugar growers to the Commonwealth.

The first outline of the Amphyctionic league among the sovereign states of the Union is found early in colonial history. In 1648 a confederation was formed under the name of the "United Colonies of New England," the communications between which were officially effected by commissioners whose meetings were held in rotation in each of the colonies.* This resulted in two congresses held before the Revolution had ripened to the dismemberment of Empire.—the congress at Albany in 1754, and the memorable one of 1774. Both of these congresses, says Chalmers, a stern monarchist, in his *Political Annals*, "originated from Massachusetts, always fruitful in projects of independence." He charges the colonies with the design of absolute independence. His harsh language is as follows :—"Massachusetts, in conformity to its accustomed principles, acted, during the civil wars, almost altogether as an independent state. It formed leagues, not only with the neighboring colonies, but with foreign nations, without the consent or knowledge of the government of England. It permitted no appeals; it refused to exercise its jurisdiction in the name of the commonwealth of England. It assumed the government of New Hampshire and Maine: it coined money * * * * Not only did Massachusetts proudly dictate to its confederates, and artfully foil the parliament, but it out-fawned and out-witted Cromwell."†

I approach the period when the struggle commenced which resulted in the loss to England of the fairest jewel in her crown. That struggle commenced in New-England, A host of splendid minds and brave spirits rise before us embalmed in the immortal souvenirs of the revolution. They belong to history. Fame has written their names high on the escutcheons of eternity. No change can now pass over the stainless mirror in which forever may be seen their deeds of glory. From the almost unnumbered host of greatness and moral worth, I select only two as the specimens of the time; and of those

* Bradford's *Hist. Mass.* 47. † Tudor's *Life of Otis*, 218, Note.

two, one died and the other became insane before the great bell of Independence Hall swung heavily in the clear air of Philadelphia, and startled the nations with the tocsin of freedom. They saw indeed the blushing orient prophetic of the sunrise, but before it rose over the blood stained Bunker, the eyes of one were dark in death and the other had suffered an eclipse of his reason. I speak of two individuals, of whom John Adams, the second President of the United States, in a letter criticising Mr. Wirt's claim for Patrick Henry as the first who "set the ball of revolution in motion,"—said, "*First above all and before all, was James Otis, next to him Oxenbridge Thacher.*"* Through these patriots, I would honor the noble and devoted band, who originated and cheered on the great crisis of Independence. These two patriots, so unlike each other in temperament and physical endowments were almost always together in their public career. They were "one and indivisible" in heart. Mr. Thacher, descended from a long line of clergymen—the sacred office being almost as hereditary in his family as in the tribe of Levi in ancient Jewry, was educated for the church; but a pulmonary weakness of voice compelled him to dedicate his great learning and varied accomplishments to the bar. He early took the colonial side in the great quarrel with the crown. His unassuming and affable deportment, strict morality, punctuality in religious duties, gave great weight to his opinions and eloquence. "The opposition of Thacher," says Tudor, the biographer of James Otis, "gave the government great uneasiness; his disposition and habits secured public confidence, and while his moderation preserved him from the imputation of ambition, his learning and ability gave weight to his opinions, and prevented him from being considered as under the influence of others."† John Adams said of him,—“They hated him worse than they did James Otis or Samuel Adams, and they feared him more.”‡ Governor Hutchinson, the organ of the crown, said of him—“Thacher was not born a

* Niles Weekly Register, vol. XIV, p. 17. Ibid., 136. Speech of Hon. Daniel Webster at Abbingdon, Mass. Oct. 9, 1848.

† Tudor's Life of Otis, 58. ‡ Ibid.. 58.

plebeian, but he seems determined to die one." James Otis, by many ranked as the master spirit of revolutionary principles, was descended from a respectable family, four generations of which, had lived before him in the colony. After a splendid classical education, he devoted his mighty energies to the study of the law, and became so eminent, that Governor Hutchinson appointed him Advocate General to the crown. The government of George the Third had determined to raise money in some way or other out of the colonies, and to make collection of the customs sure the officers demanded by authority of an order in Council that the supreme Court should grant them "Writs of Assistance" which would enable them with impunity to break open every house and lock in the colonies, on pretence of searching for goods on which duties had not been paid. The colonies resisted, and it became the duty of Otis to plead for the Writ of Assistance, before the Supreme Court. He instantly resigned his office and its emoluments, rather than array himself on the side of judicial tyranny. He and Thacher were employed as counsel to oppose the motion for writs, both pleading without fees, although great sums were offered them. The language of Otis was, "In such a cause I despise all fees." The case came on. On the side of the people Thacher spoke first, and President John Adams, who was present, said of his argument that his "reasoning was ingenious and able, delivered in a tone of great mildness and moderation. But Otis was a flame of fire; with a promptitude of classical allusions, a depth of research, a rapid summary of historical events and dates, a profusion of legal authorities, a prophetic glance into futurity, and a rapid torrent of impetuous eloquence, he hurried away all before him. * * * * Every man of an immensely crowded audience appeared to me to go away as I did, ready to take up arms against writs of assistance. * * * * Then and there the child Independence was born. Fifteen years afterwards, 1776, he grew up to manhood and declared himself free."*

* Letters of John Adams.

Yet a melancholy destiny hung over both these patriots, whose different peculiarities are thus sketched by Robert Treat Paine, afterwards one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. In answer to questions proposed in a familiar letter from Jonathan Sewell to Paine, asking what he thought of Otis and Thacher, he compared the first to "a concave mirror which burns up everything which cannot be melted;" in answer to what of Thacher? "As Jacob of old said of his son Dan, as a serpent in the way that biteth the horses heels so that his rider falleth backwards.

With Thacher the lamp of life was burning low, and he sent for John Adams to transfer some of his legal business into his hands. Adams asked him if he had seen the Virginia Resolves: "Oh yes"—said he—"They are men! they are noble spirits! It kills me to think of the lethargy and stupidity that prevails here. I long to be out. I *will* go out. I will go into Court and make a speech which shall be read after my death as my dying testimony against this infernal tyranny they are bringing upon us!"* He slept with his fathers ten years before the dread appeal to arms was made.†

For the eloquent and irresistible Otis a more sad fate was reserved. His splendid mind, overtasked by the toils in freedom's holy cause, became a ruin. Reason wandered dimly and darkly amidst the wrecks of a grand intellect, until a flash of lightning in a thunder storm, making sacred to immortality the victim it scathed, released his great spirit to a better world. The public career of Otis ended in 1771 or 2, although the mental eclipse that came over him did not terminate until his death in 1783.

The time had now come when New-England was to wrest the leading strings of colonial rule, and assume nationality! Hancock, Adams, Warren, and a host of great minds, were maturing the project of Independence. Governor Hutchinson

* Letters of John Adams.

† Oxenbridge Thacher was the grandson of the one of the name from whose diary extracts are given above, and the great-grandfather of the author of this address. [Ed.]

has declared that as early as 1769 Samuel Adams said in a Boston meeting—"Independent we are, and independent we will be!" and that about the same time Joseph Hawley of Northampton said in the General Court—"That he knew not how parliament could ever have acquired a right to legislate over the colonies!"*

I select but one souvenir from the pen of Warren, one of the first martyrs of liberty. It is from an address to a Suffolk Convention of Delegates, Dr. Joseph Warren being chairman of the committee. I extract the opening of his preamble and the closing paragraph of his report:—"Whereas the power but not the justice, the vengeance but not the wisdom, which of old persecuted, scourged and exiled our fugitive parents from their native shores, *now pursue us*, their guiltless children, with unrelenting severity—and whereas this, then savage and uncultivated desert, was purchased by the toil and treasure, or acquired by the blood and valor of those, our venerable progenitors—to us they bequeathed the dear-bought inheritance!" * * * * "and while we enjoy the blessings and the rewards of the faithful, the torrent of panegyric will roll our reputations to that latest period when the streams of time shall be absorbed in the abyss of eternity!"

Can I, as a son of New-England, erect a nobler monument to the honor of the fathers, than thus to bring to remembrance their imperishable deeds, and their expression of those bold and free thoughts which seemed "to wander through the eternity" of the future, and garner up the coming acclaim of a thousand generations, bearing on their imperishable names as beacon fires of freedom to a world, until universal political emancipation shall have made that world all one New England, and the home of equal laws and self-governing people. So full of destiny were the fathers of our natal land, that it would scarce have surprised them had a celestial messenger informed them, with undeniable signs of his truthful mission, that in the year 1850 the number of their descendants should be twenty-five millions—that in 1900, one hundred millions with pride shall

* Bradford's Hist. Mass. 219, note.

point to the rock-bound shores of New-England, as to a father land; that the bannered eagles of liberty shall flutter, as now they flutter in the winds of heaven, from Aroostook to Oregon, that a line from east to west across the united republic of freedom spans one-third of the circumference of the earth—that the world's largest rivers, broadest lakes, and loftiest mountains, blaze with altar fires of liberty, the goddess who first met our brave old prophetic fathers on the Plymouth rock, on storied Trimountain, on the banks of the classic Connecticut, and beneath the poetic old elms of New-Haven!

Is any ancestry on earth more sublimely elevated than that of New England? Greater than kings were our brave and good old fathers. They have imprinted their thoughts and characters so deeply upon the age in which they lived that three quarters of a century have not dimmed a line or effaced a vestige. Like the fabulous Indian legend of the leap of the great bull mammoth after he had shaken off the avenging thunder bolts of the great Great Spirit, enraged at his destruction of the warrior tribes, and beasts, and forests—his leap over the great lakes, leaving his foot-prints in the unwasting rock from which he sprang, so our fathers left their mighty track behind them, stamping the age. This was the era, and this the mission of the apostles of self-government. New England was the theatre of the great drama of freedom. Sings the gifted Pierpont,

"Oh, is not this a holy spot!
 'Tis the high place of Freedom's birth;
 God of our fathers! is it not
 The holiest spot of all the earth.*

Nor yet is New-England so niggard of fame, or her sons such paupers in renown, as not to allow all her compatriots in freedom's cause their just due and the meed of praise which the justice, not the generosity, of History has awarded them. Can Virginia ever forget that New-England as well as the world bowed low in reverence to her Washington, and echoed back the thunders of the eloquent Patrick Henry? Pennsyl-

* Bunker Hill Corner Stone Ode in 1825.

vania gave her immortal names to the cause. New York and New Jersey furnished soldiery and the bloodiest battle fields of the revolution. The "Harry Hotspurs" of the Carolinas furnished "Marion and his men," and they strewed the fields of Guildford and King's Mountain with their noblest dead. The Maryland line was freedom's own chivalry. "The old Thirteen" were one in freedom's wars. Nor would we stop here. The brave and lofty-souled of other lands fought side by side with Washington and Green and Knox and Lincoln. France saw her Lafayette in the charging *melée*, and his blood wet the plains of Brandywine, and heard the victor shout of his conquering legends at Yorktown. Ireland saw her Montgomery pour out his blood at the castellated Quebec; Germany sent us her De Kalb, and her Steuben, and her Pulaski; Poland from her wounded and crushed heart sent us her Kosciuszko, and tyrannic England herself, her Lee and her Stirling. The cause was a world's. Freedom every where fought the battle with us by prayer and good wishes. We conquered. The picture of the great New England character was complete—sanctioned by the God of battles, and crowned by the suffrages of the world.

Can any other line of ancestry present nobler points—or should other bosoms ever beat with prouder emotions than ours, when we look back to those yew-shaded grave-yards we have left so far behind us, and where rest our honored fathers in the "cold obstruction" of their simple but glorious tombs! If we ever forget whence we sprung, from that moment we cease to be sons and daughters of New England.

The mission of New England was to found empire after her own illustrious pattern. She was to be mother of states. From her bosom went out Western New York. Ohio was all her own, and Illinois and Indiana, and Missouri and Iowa and Wisconsin, call her mother—while her youngest child blooms in the gardens of the Oregon where the "sweet South" breathes over the sleeping mirror of the Pacific, and kisses the flowery strands of the Columbia. Can it be possible that a portion of our land which has sent out such swarming millions, can have any remaining? So far from being desolate

New England is still so crowded with population that males are measured by square acres and females by miles*—all as ready to engage in new settlements after the New England pattern, as were her fathers of the olden time.

Wherever they migrate, the Church throws up its spire; the School-house smiles in the grove; the college rears its stately walls; the temple of Justice is erected, and the Press, the "artillery of thought" is established: and, in a moment as it were, New England herself is struck dumb with astonishment at the report of western wealth, and the roar of out numbering millions swells over the Alleghanies as it will soon roll over the Rocky Mountains, thundering at the Halls of Congress, and at our marts of commerce, with all the wants and the power of an immense and free people. The lone *alma mater* of the pilgrims, the venerable halls of Harvard, has been reinforced by more than one hundred colleges and sister universities,—while the Boston Free School system flourishes in the cities of the Mississippi vale.

Sons of New England! see the fulfilment of the great mission of your fathers, and forget not the vows that a parentage so august imposes upon every son and daughter of that land of the rock and the flood, of the hoar mountains and the ever sounding ocean. "*In hoc signo vinces*,"—as the heaven-born cross that showed itself to Constantine was inscribed,—we can only succeed as New England has succeeded. The change of skies over our heads, or the languid breezes of the spicy South can effect no change in the immortality and strength of principle. We must grapple with it as they grappled with it—live as they lived—our death be theirs! Who can wonder at the love her sons and daughters bear New England—a tender, soul-piercing love, held in close embrace, and embosomed among the household gods of the deepest affections—its idea ever in memory—its image ever present, and as vocal as the mystic shell taken from the sands of the Pilgrim shores, however distant from its natal element, ever hymning the deep ocean anthem!

* When Gen. Jackson made his northern tour, three miles of girls met him at Lowell.

It is not even for a son of New England to say that her character has no faults; but this may be affirmed that often the shafts of ridicule have been directed against peculiarities that were no faults. Even the inquisitiveness of a new people is a virtue—the “guess” is but the algebraic X by which the unknown is sought and ascertained. The witchcraft delusion of the ancient city of Salem was but an error of the times, not of the country. It was still more rife in Germany, where one hundred thousand victims suffered, and in England and Scotland, where sixty thousand were executed, some of whom were condemned by “the learned and pious” Sir Matthew Hale, who, to this day, is a brilliant luminary of the Common Law.*

Small specks on the noonday sun’s disc are not seen by the naked eye,—nor should a passive shadow over the moral mirror of the Puritan diminish our respect, or circumscribe his fame. They were among the best, the bravest and the most learned men of England, two hundred and twenty-eight years ago. Mere accident only hindered Cromwell, Hampden, and Pym from emigration across the Atlantic with the fathers of New England, in which case Oliver Cromwell might have been a Connecticut Justice of the Peace, or have risen to the dignity of a deaconship in the church!

Nor will a New England Society, on the anniversary of the Landing, fail to pay the due tribute of respect to the founders of the colonies of gallant and noble France in this Western World—mingling the proud blood of that sunny clime and its sweet language of silvery accent in the “pure well of English undefiled”—discovering and settling the banks of two of the mightiest rivers of North America, the St. Lawrence and Mississippi, and the first of all European nations in the discovery of that immense chain of Lakes, that grand necklace of fresh water oceans strung upon the St. Lawrence.

And, honor to immortal principle! came the cavaliers of France, as came our own New England fathers, to convert a wilderness world into a garden, and to teach the name and

* Chandler’s Crim. Trials, 67, 72. Howell’s State Trials, VI. 693.

religion of Christ to savage tribes, the idol and sun worshippers of the American forest. The fathers of the society of Jesus wrote home to France letters breathing the same pure literature, kindly feelings and warm hearted piety towards the renowned Natchez warriors, or those of the Choctaws and Arkansas, as did those of the venerable Eliot, the pilgrim apostle to the Narragansetts and Pequods. The Pilgrims of France have left their footsteps, the imprint of their genius and their liquid and melodious appellations all over the State that bears that name of music, Louisiana. And here in the commercial emporium of the South-west, the city of fair women, brave men, may be seen the confluence of the French and the Anglo-American blood, producing a new and most rare variety of the many leaved Tree of Humanity,—heavy with that fruitage of brave deeds, sublime benevolence, and public spirit, that made up the fabric of civic renown—the glory of our nature.

It is a touching souvenir of the fathers of New England that they so, by their kindness and virtues, won upon the heart of Squanto, the poor Indian who was almost their only friend during the first dreadful winter of their exile, that shortly after he came among them to die, begging them to “pray that he might go to the Englishmen’s God in heaven!”* Thus thought, thus acted, thus lived and died, those moral heroes and christian philanthropists of whom England and Europe were not worthy. Time deals most kindly with their memories. Their fame is as fresh as when their great deeds were first spread on the page of History. Year after year adds to the influence set in motion by the master spirits of the era of self-government. The name given them by the Indians in their ineffectual endeavors to pronounce the word “English,” *Yankees*, has spread over the land as a generic term. And with that name go art and improvement hand in hand—with it go “peace on earth and good will to men.”

The sons of New England go with the emancipated Helots of Africa to their own sunburnt continent, and a republic rises

* *Magnalia*, 1. 53.

on the Liberian shore. They go with the missions of the Saviour to Athens, and the groves of the Lyceum and Academia again become voiceful with the lectures of American Teachers. They go to the Isles of the Southern oceans, and populous tribes renounce idolatry, and the church and the school house spring up amidst the palm groves of Owhyhee. They launch the ships of the Turkish Sultan: they lay down the railways of the Russian Czar; they wander, as the Palmers of the olden time, over sacred Palestine; they compete in Rome and Italy with art as old as the ruins of the seven-hilled city. At home Franklin, the Boston boy, laid his bold hand on the mane of the thunder-cloud, and brought down its lightnings to play harmless at his feet; and Morse, the Charlestown boy, has made that lightning the Stenographic printer and post boy of the world!

None ask where are the sons of New England; but, *where are they not?* From the shores of Lake Superior to the "Halls of the Montezumas;" from the sunrise of Maine to the sunset of California, their arms, their laws, their customs have been borne, their principles respected, their influence felt.

Yet all we have said is but history. Prophecy with its solemn wing, sweeping the domains of the future, has not been invoked; no draft drawn upon the treasury of time; no picturings of the Ideal have dropped from the glowing pencil of Fancy. The truth is more strange than fiction, and facts come to us loaded with wonder. The nations of antiquity sought to connect their origin with the machinery of the Celestial Olympus. The warriors of heaven, all unseen but terrible, fought in their battles, and gave an awful sublimity to Homer's war muse in his songs of Grecian arms. But New England needed no drapery borrowed from national superstition to give the emotions of the sublime to that consecrated spot, where

—————"our fathers knelt
In prayer and battle for a world!"*

The transplantation of empire over the sea is itself a movement of grandeur that permits no accessories of imagery.

* Pierpont.

Nor is the end yet. The series of moral progression, just begun, cannot end until all the world is as free as New England herself; and *she* is, and ever was, as free as the unchained billows that dash upon her iron-bound shore !

And now, by the battles which drenched the fields of the Revolution with blood, by the defeats and triumphs of that "second war of Independance," by our unbroken laurel wreath of Mexican victories,—and farther and better still, by the memory of our good old warrior christian fathers who sleep amidst the rocks and in the vales of New England, by our sweet visions and memories of fireside and home—I charge you all, my brethren and sisters of far off New England, never to forget the era and the mission of the pilgrims; never forget their graves, lonely and wild as they are; never forget that, although founders of empire, and fathers of a nation, they were meek and humble, and patient and long suffering—that they were stern to their foes, and unconquerable in battle—mild and serene in judgment—loving to their friends, easily reconciled to their enemies, but uncrushed and uncrushable by tyrants ! Never forget that you are sons and daughters of New England. !

